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San Francisco Sheriff's Department Five Keys Charter School Awarded Charter School of the Year

Today, it was announced at the California Charter School Association's (CCSA) 21st annual conference in San Jose that the San Francisco Sheriff's Department Five Keys Charter School is the recipient of the 2014 Hart Vision Award for Charter School of the Year (Northern California). This is a great honor for the Sheriff's Department and Five Keys and especially because of the alternative nature of the programs offered when compared with a traditional charter school model. There is nothing else like the Five Keys Charter School in the country. Founded in 2003 and now the top charter association in California and the second largest charter school association in the United States, the CCSA is recognizing the work by awarding this honor at the 2014 CCSA conference.

Each year, as a part of the annual California Charter Schools Conference, CCSA takes the time to honor outstanding achievements from across the movement through the presentation of the Hart Vision Awards. The 2014 Hart Vision Award recognizes schools that have made significant contributions to CCSA's mission to increase student achievement by supporting and expanding California's quality charter public school movement.

"This recognition really is a testament to the hard work, creativity, and dedication of the teachers and staff at Five Keys," says United Educators of San Francisco President Dennis Kelly. "Few things are more important than transforming the lives of incarcerated people and helping society by reducing recidivism rates. These educators are special people working in an unconventional and challenging environment. This is what a charter school should be."

The connection between incarceration and lack of education is undeniable. "Education is a right, not a privilege. With 65% of state prisoners lacking a high school diploma, today's award helps shine light on the connection between incarceration and a lack of

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education. By providing inmates returning to our neighborhoods with an education; Five Keys is helping to create safer communities, reduce the amount of tax dollars going to the prison industrial complex, and help the formerly incarcerated restart their lives and contribute to society," said Five Keys Executive Director Steve Good.

The child of an incarcerated parent is six times more likely to be suspended or expelled from school, and eight times more likely to be arrested. Sadly, 1 in 28 school aged children have an incarcerated parent. However, correctional education programs have proven to lower the likelihood of returning to jail by 43% according to the 2013 Rand Corporation Correctional Education Report. If programs like Five Keys were replicated across the nation, the savings to taxpayers would be in the billions of dollars.

The San Francisco Sheriff's Department's Five Keys Charter School was the first charter school in the nation to operate inside of a correctional facility. Today, we are proud to say that through our 20 different workforce development partners in San Francisco and Los Angeles, we now have more adult students outside of the jails. We know that an education is the best way to prevent incarceration.

"Where incarceration is the intersection of so many wrongs in an inmate's life, historically, within the U.S. prison system, opportunities proved few in providing the ex-offender hope through a working skill. However those times are changing, as evidenced by the durable reach of the San Francisco Sheriff's Department's Five Keys Charter School whose common sense and compassionate approach to improving public safety is by not letting incarcerated minds decay," stated Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi.

About the California Charter Schools Association

The California Charter Schools Association is the membership and professional organization serving 1,130 charter public schools and more than 519,000 students in the state of California. The vision of the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) is to empower parents and educators to unleash a new era of innovation within public education so that highly autonomous and accountable schools of choice provide quality learning opportunities for all California students.

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